

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

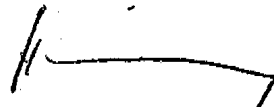
February 2, 1973

Dear Andy:

It was good of you to send along the Conquest clipping with your note of January 15. Our Embassy in London mentioned the article at the time it was published, but this is the first opportunity I have had to read the full text.

With the announcements of this week relating to the Vietnam cease-fire, I believe the facts speak for themselves, fully supporting the President's policy. Perhaps at least some of those who have criticized this policy will now comprehend its wisdom.

Warm regards,



Henry A. Kissinger

General A. J. Goodpaster, USA  
Supreme Allied Commander  
SHAPE  
APO New York 09055

*I appreciated your telegrams.*

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ACTION

January 25, 1973

**MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER**

**FROM:** Helmut Sonnenfeldt  
**SUBJECT:** Reply to General Goodpaster

On January 12, The Times of London published a very powerful article, 'The Propaganda of Atrocity,' by Robert Conquest taking critics of the President's Vietnam policy to task for their retreat (in George Orwell's words) into the mental slum of atrocity story-mongering. He suggests that different views on Vietnam are natural enough, but that it is not tolerable for the critics to represent facts as other than they are -- characterizing Swedish Prime Minister Palme's criticism as the merest ranting and canting.

General Goodpaster has sent you a copy of the article with the note at Tab B, in the belief that you may find Conquest's observations of interest.

The letter for your signature to Goodpaster at Tab A would thank him for his letter, and express your hope that the cease-fire announcements of this week will lead critics of the President's policy to a fuller appreciation of the role the United States has played in Southeast Asia.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That you sign the letter to General Goodpaster at Tab A.

ADC:mmm



SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER EUROPE  
SHAPE, BELGIUM

15 January 1973

Dear Henry:

If you haven't already seen the attached, you may find some of the observations rather penetrating.

It also occurred to me that the President might find it interesting.

With best personal regards,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "A. J. Goodpaster", is positioned above the typed name.

A. J. GOODPASTER  
General, United States Army  
Supreme Allied Commander

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger  
The White House  
Washington, D. C. 20501

THE TIMES FRIDAY JANUARY 12 1973

Robert Conquest

# The propaganda of atrocity

Arthur Koestler describes in his autobiography how Willi Muenzenberg, the Comintern's propaganda genius, criticized his work in putting the Communist line on the Spanish War as "too weak, too objective". What they wanted, Muenzenberg explained, was stories of the enemy burning their prisoners alive, running them over with tanks, and so on.

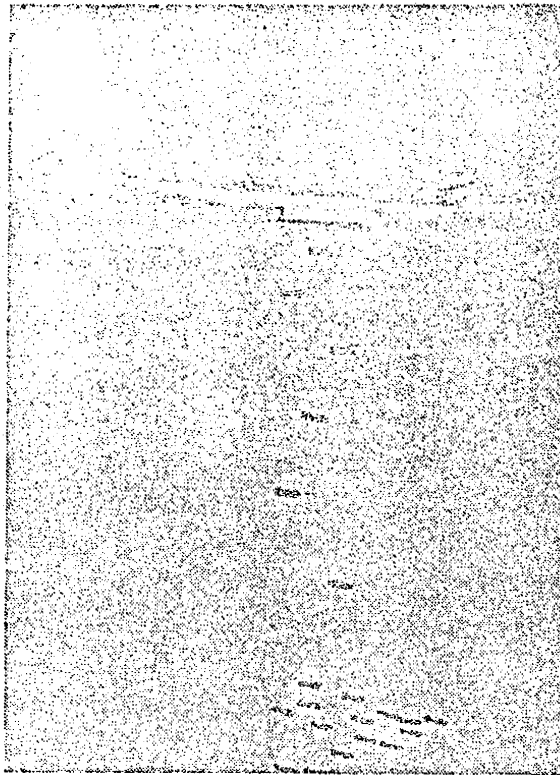
The Muenzenberg principle, much in use of late, is to present a specific allegation in such a way as to make the blood boil and so to preempt or inhibit judgment. The loser, in terms of western opinion, is not the state that commits the most atrocities so much as the one whose enemies have the best propaganda machine. All the same, any particular allegation of violence or injustice may be true or untrue; and if true it may be typical or exceptional. It is no good our being passive customers of the most efficient atrocity-pusher: we have to make a certain effort—above all, to avoid the double standard in this field of which Solzhenitsyn complains in his Nobel Speech.

One paradoxical reason our views may become distorted is that in general the more easily a mispractice can be reported on, the less repressive the regime. This is even true within the Communist block. The fact that a fair amount of information is now available on the sufferings of the opposition in the USSR, while this is not so of North Korea or North Vietnam, and was equally not so of Stalin's Russia, really does indicate that the present Soviet regime is less repressive than these.

The Colonels' regime in Greece is typical of those most often in the atrocity news columns. It is clearly an oppressive one in a general sense. We may all hope for a fairly rapid return to democracy (though not to the alleged "democracy" of those much routed and critics who really stand for more unpleasant dictatorship). Allegations of killing, as against brutality, in Greece are few. Every liberal would agree that Yugoslavia is not only

less oppressive than Greece, but already was so 10 years ago. It was only by a turn in the other direction that the country that we learnt a few years ago that at the beginning of the 1950s Kerkovitch, then Yugoslav Minister of the Interior, was having people shot by the dozen and the dozen through the towns and villages of the Balkans. For in Yugoslavia an outrageously horrible example. We should conclude that Greece, though a tyrant, does not really rate very high in the scale.

Part of the difficulty (though not always impossibility) of establishing the facts of individual allegations of police brutality is that they are often provided by devoted adherents of influential groups dedicated in



A B52 in action: all the talk about "indiscriminate", even "Hiroshima-type" bombing raids is "nonsense".

principle to the idea that political advantage to their side is the highest moral criterion, taking automatic precedence over truth and such things. The same applies to the propaganda of war. An official representative of the Vietnamese Communists speaking in Stockholm (where else?) a few years ago charged that children were "gunned down in their thousands, beheaded, buried alive, quartered and thrown into the flames" by the Americans (*The Times*, October 4, 1965). One would have thought that such things had discredited

or "twice the power of," that of Hiroshima, and with the intention of killing and terrorizing civilians, could somehow only cause a minute proportion of the Hiroshima casualties is plainly nonsense.

Almost everyone supports or has supported armed struggles in which civilians may be or are killed. Admirers of the IRA, the Arab terrorists and the Vietnamese, indeed, must support or condone the killing of civilians on purpose. In any case, such stuff comes particularly ill from those who openly advocate Communist victory in

the swiftest. Their Prime Minister, Mr Olof Palme, compared the bombing of Grenada, Oradour, Babi Yar, Katyn, Lidice, Sharpsville and Treblinka. (Hue? No, not Hue.) In fact, with the exception of Grenada (at any rate the public knowledge), none of these offers any parallel at all to the recent bombing. The whole passage is the merest ranting and ranting—which might, indeed, be Swedish swan-song. Anyhow, one does not recall that the Swedish Social Democrats have much to be proud of. They did not, I think, protest against Oradour and so on at the time—a time when they were the only neutral which allowed German troops to pass through their territory. It is true that they have no blood on

their own hands, apart from that of the Balts so abjectly handed over to Russia after the war....

Their egregious Gunnar Myrdal (a member of that 1945 Government) now serves happily on a Committee on United States "war crimes" together with the Soviet judge Lev Smirnov, so rightly criticized by PHS the other day for his infamous conduct of the Starovsky case. In an article in the *Scientific American* last year, Myrdal actually asked himself why it was that Swedish foreign aid went out on higher moral principles than that of other countries. The official in charge of that aid has since explained that Sweden passes it by preference to countries where "the people" conduct the distribution, such as Cuba and North Vietnam. Oh, I see—a social-democratic definition of popular rule is one where social-democrats have all long since been executed, and a complete Leninist authoritarianism prevails.

The anti-American agitator, Tom Hayden, has complained (in the *Evening Standard*) that the British, unlike the Swedes, have not shown much enthusiasm for the new line in atrocity propaganda. This seems to be true, in spite of the semblance of uproar largely created in practice by a handful of journalists and one or two politicians in difficulties seeking an issue.

No doubt this increase in scepticism is in part due to the experiences of last year—first, the plain evidence that the south was being invaded by the communists, and did not wish to accept them; second, the propaganda about the bombing of the dykes, with its obvious spuriousness (recalling to older readers the notorious germ warfare falsehoods of the Korean War). It was putting a strain, too, on anyone's capacity for credulous malice to ask them to believe that President Nixon is simply hooked on bombing for bombing's sake, or acting out of pettish resentment.

It should be possible for adults to take a line, pro or con, without descending to this so often it is counterproductive. Though himself a supporter of the Spanish Republican cause in the extent of fighting and being wounded in his battle, he nonetheless wrote that for him the most "frightening" thing about that war was not the violence on the spot, but the systematic retreat of the Western front when he pulled back and a "sum" of atrocity stories appearing. Different views on Vietnam (on Spain) are normal enough. What is not normal is to represent the facts as more than they are in order to provoke a mindless, emotional along with those of the Swedes. Olof Palme and Gunnar Myrdal.

The author is a historian and journalist.  
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